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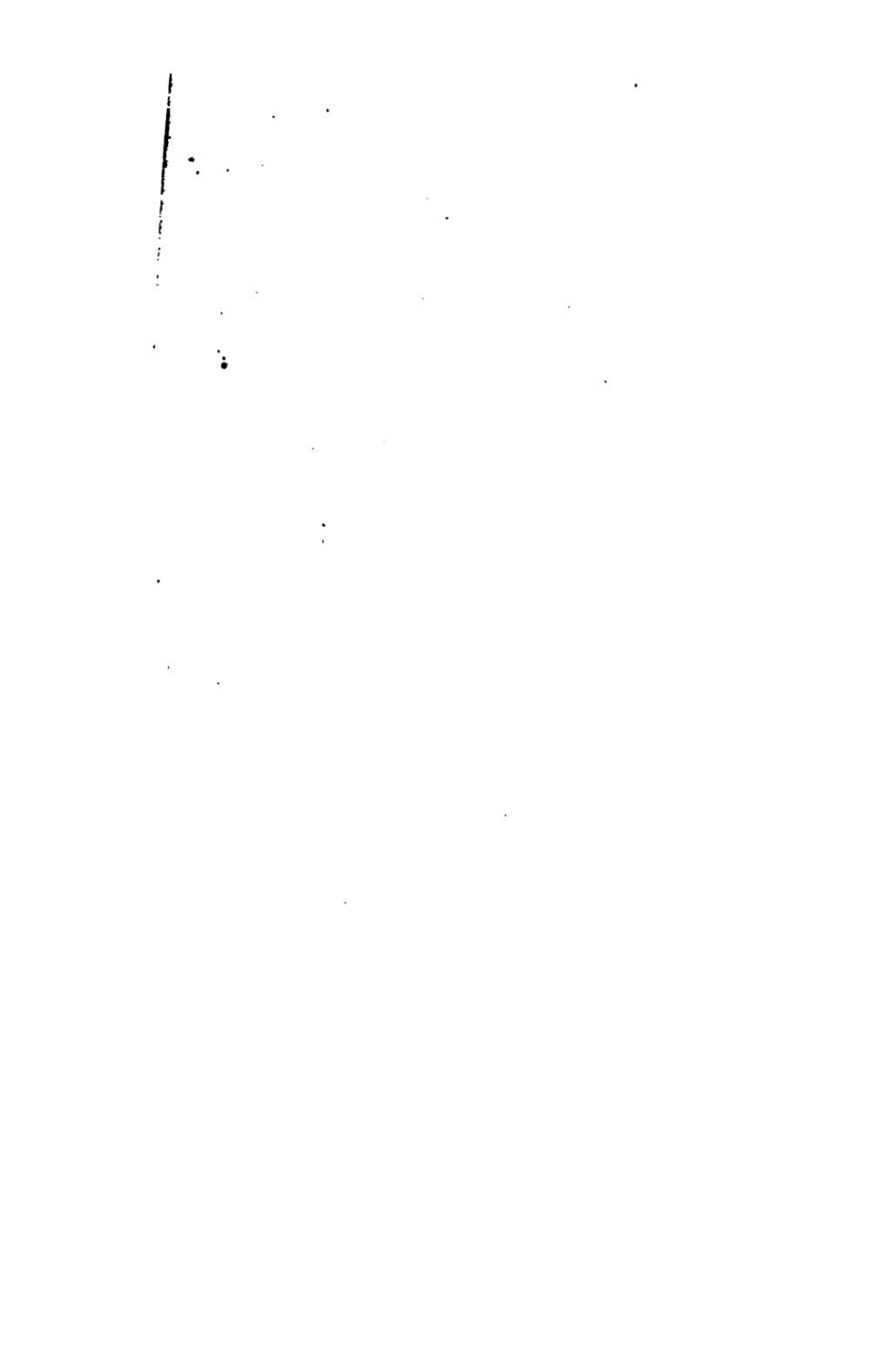


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LIGHT ON CHURCH SMALVING

OR VES

THE EXCELSIOR OF CHURCH

Scripture set forth

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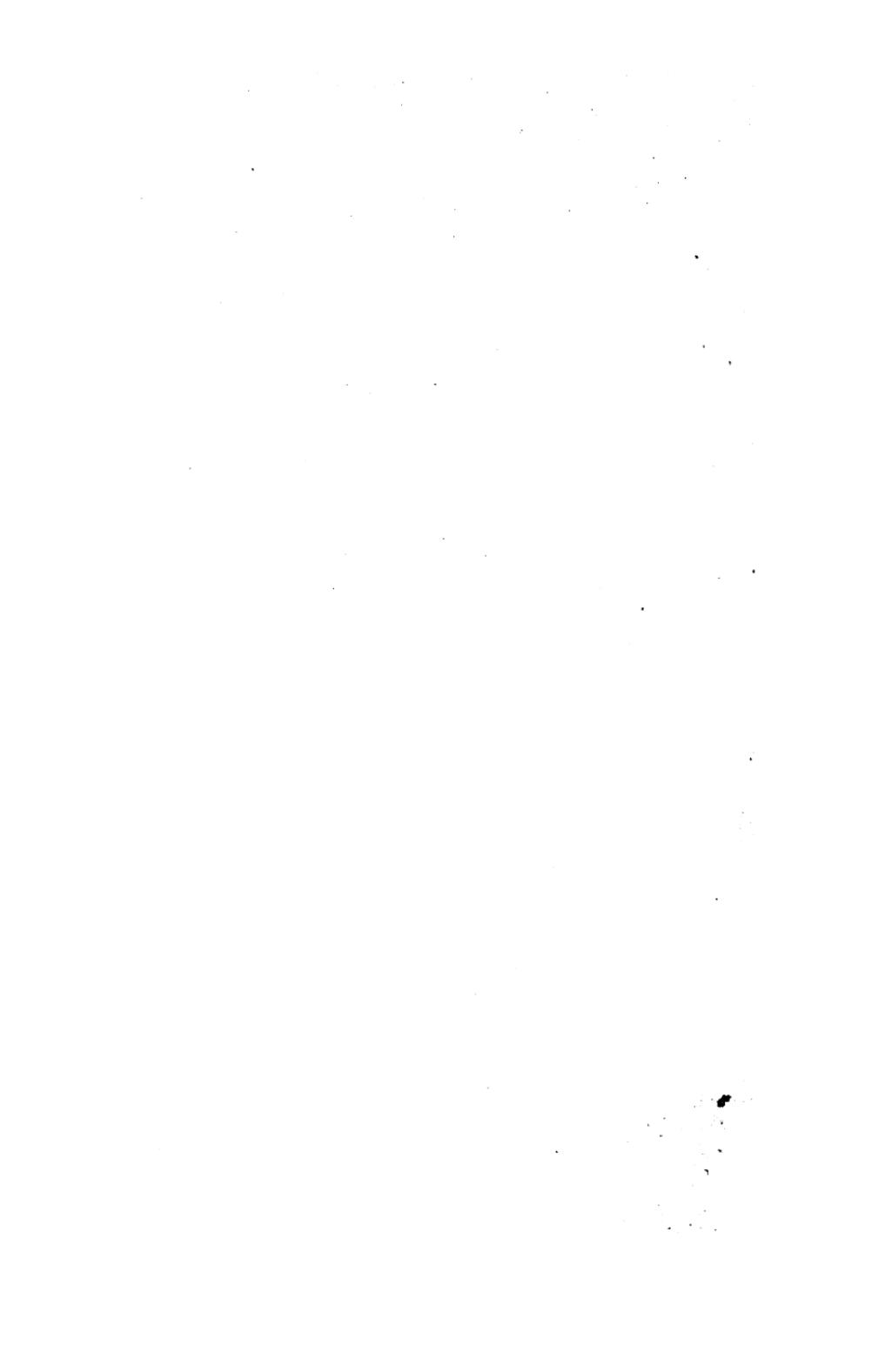
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THE

LIGHT OF CHRIST EXALTED:

OR THE

MORE EXCELLENT WAY

BRIEFLY SET FORTH.

BEING

AN APOLOGY FOR LEAVING THE METHODISTS, AND
JOINING THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

ADDRESSED TO THE SINCERE AND DEVOUT AMONGST

THE METHODISTS.

BY J. S.

"BE READY ALWAYS TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERY MAN THAT ASKETH YOU
A REASON OF THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU WITH MEEKNESS AND FEAR."

1 Pet. iii. 15.

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CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTION.

To the sincere and devout amongst the people called Methodists.

DEAR FRIENDS,

Having been induced to leave your Society, from motives which I will endeavour to explain, and being now precluded the opportunity I once had of making known to you the sentiments and feelings of my heart, upon subjects of the highest importance, I take the liberty of addressing you in this manner, for the purpose of laying before you some of those things which are the result of my private reflections, and the secret convictions of my mind, and which must constitute my apology for the step I have taken.

When I consider the number of years spent in your Community—the friendly intimacy enjoyed with some of you—and, more than all, that my religious experience commenced whilst I was amongst you—I cannot but feel a warm attachment to you—an attachment which I believe will endure to the end of my days.

In early life my views were associated with yours, and I think I can truly say that you have been to me,

in kindness, as my kindred, my friends, and my home ; and, in that light, I believe I shall always look back to you, as an emigrant looks towards the land of his nativity, with feelings of affectionate regard.

I verily believe that many amongst the Methodists have, under divine influence, been zealous and active in promoting good works ; and when I look to the rise, at the rapid progress, and great extension of Methodism ; at the change in the moral conduct, and growth of religious experience apparently manifested in a vast number of the poor and middle classes of society, I am ready to conclude *that they were a people brought forth by the power of God.* Again, when I contemplate the chief instrument made use of in its formation—his strictly moral conduct and indefatigable labours, as he went forth without any preconcerted plan, led by a way which he knew not—his naturally strong prejudices often brought down, and his will subdued by the Spirit of power, demonstrations of which seemed to accompany him in his work :—when I contemplate these things, I am ready to say, Surely he was at times moved by the divine influence. And I do believe that not only are individuals raised up from time to time for *particular services in the Church*, but that whole bodies are likewise called, in an especial degree, *to bear certain testimonies to the world.* Of the former, John Wesley may be considered an instance. His character and works are before the public ; from which we may infer that he appears to have had but one leading object in view, which he pursued to the end of his life ; and according

to his own declaration that object was *to revive the religion of the Bible.** And with regard to the people called "Methodists," I believe they have, in a measure, *borne faithful testimony to the experimental religion of the heart.* The first preachers, especially, were plain men, frequently taught of God; and such as were converted themselves, could say to the people, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you": and whilst their ministry was kept under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, it produced a living effect upon the hearers. But a dead ministry—that which is unaccompanied by the power and quickening influence of the Spirit—whatever be the form, can never reach the heart, nor convert the soul. I am, however, willing to believe that, in many instances, the preaching of the Methodists has really, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, reached the heart, and converted the soul; and therefore it has, on those occasions, been under Divine Influence.

That the Methodists have been instrumental in the revival of religion, not only in this nation but also in America and other parts, must be admitted by all seriously thinking persons. They held up, as a leading doctrine, "The knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins,"¹ and the sound of this hath rapidly spread, especially through Great Britain; for there is scarcely a town or village wherein this doctrine has not been taught. To many it appeared new, and at first met with no little opposition; but though the truly qualified

* I understand by this the religion of Christ.

(1) 1 John i. 3. (2) Luke i. 77.

proclaimers of it were despised by some and envied by others, yet they were made eminently useful in stirring up many of the clergy and dissenting preachers to a zealous attention to religion; and thus there was a revival of truth in the land. After this people had suffered awhile, they were established as a religious Society, in the face of their enemies; and I do believe that they have, in some measure, borne the true marks of the visible Church of God, and of having been a people truly visited of the Lord.

As already alluded to, my spiritual eye was first opened whilst I was in connexion with you; and I may further add, that I frequently felt refreshed and edified in many of your meetings, and the remembrance of some of my outward engagements whilst amongst you is, at this moment, very satisfactory and pleasant to my feelings; for far be it from me to discourage or undervalue public exertions for the benefit of our fellow creatures, when they are undertaken from a right sense of religious duty, and can truly be called the labours of love.

I have for a considerable time felt, in an especial manner, a strong drawing in my mind towards you, my beloved friends and old companions; and as some of you, in our occasional intercourse, have asked me why I left your Society, it is but reasonable that I should comply with your request.

CHAP. II.

REASONS FOR LEAVING THE METHODISTS.

If then, what I have already stated be still the sentiments and feelings of my heart, a question will naturally arise, What could have induced me to forsake all my old friends, and to withdraw from their Society? I answer, It was not for want of an affectionate attachment to them, as a religious body, nor from any quarrel with any individual member; but I was induced to take this step, *because I had found a more excellent way*—a way anciently cast up as “an high way,” and so simple and plain, that “the wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein.”¹ Yet this way had been overlooked by me, and that too, on account of its small appearance. This way became to me “a new and living way;”² and although it was the way of death to all my former notional religion, yet did it become the way of true spiritual health and peace, such as I had never felt the equal thereto, in any former way.

And now, my dear friends, show I unto you this more excellent way, this new and living way, this way in which the ancient prophets walked, and more especially

(1) *Isaiah xxxv. 8.* (2) *Hebrews x. 20.*

in which the primitive Christians trod. This way is **THE LIGHT WITHIN**;¹ that which maketh manifest in the secret of the heart what is wrong, and also what is right; that which convinceth of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;²—the inward Reprover—the inward Comforter;³—the True Light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world⁴—the Light of the world.⁵

But some may be ready to say,—This is no new way, but that which was from the beginning. I grant it. For although, in reference to former dispensations, it is called a “new and living way;” and, compared with my former experience, I have found it so to myself; yet we are assured it is that which was from the beginning; as it is written, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him: and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and *the life was the light of men*. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”⁶

It appears, therefore, that the spirit and principle of true religion has, in all ages, and under every dispensation, remained the same. And with this view agrees the following declaration of the Apostle: “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spi-

(1) Luke xi. 35. (2) John xvi. 8. (3) John xiv. 16. (4) John i. 9.
(5) John viii. 12. (6) John i. 5.

ritual meat ; and did all drink the same spiritual drink : for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them : and that Rock was Christ.¹ Therefore hath Christ, from the beginning, been the light and life of men ; although, under former dispensations, this Light has shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not ; but in these last days it is more fully revealed by the Gospel.

It was this *Divine Light* which enabled Samuel to distinguish Saul among the people,² and David among the sons of Jesse.³ It was this *Inward Principle* also which Elijah called *the still small voice*,⁴ and by which Elisha detected the covetousness of Gehazi.⁵ It was this which showed Job his vileness,⁶ and with which David communed in stillness.⁷ This constituted the *wisdom* of Solomon,⁸ and the principal *theme* of the prophet Isaiah.⁹ It was this which Peter called the "*more sure word of prophecy*,"¹⁰ and James "*the ingrafted word*."¹¹ This it was to which John, in all his writings, bore such ample testimony, and which Paul called "*the grace of God*,"¹² or "*the word of his grace*."¹³—that by which holy men of old wrote and spoke :¹⁴—in short, it is "*Christ in you the hope of glory*,"¹⁵ "*The Minister of the Sanctuary*."¹⁶ This is the *foundation* of the Church,¹⁷ and that *by which* the Church is built up.¹⁸ It has, in all ages, been the *companion of the pious*,¹⁹

(1) 1 Cor. x. 4. (2) 1 Sam. ix. 17. (3) 1 Sam. xvi. 12. (4) 1 Kings xix. 12. (5) 2 Kings v. 26. (6) Job xl. 4. (7) Psalm iv. 4. (8) Wisdom of Solomon vii. 7. (9) Isaiah ii. 5. (10) 2 Peter i. 19. (11) James i. 21. (12) Titus ii. 11. (13) Acts xx. 32. (14) 2 Peter i. 21. (15) Col. i. 27. (16) Heb. viii. 2. (17) Matt. xvi. 18. (18) Jude 20. (19) Gen. v. 24.

and the *crown of the assemblies of the faithful.*¹ And, if you can believe my testimony, it has also been the cause of the poor insignificant creature who is now addressing you, withdrawing from your Society.

This light within is a divine principle, distinct from the gift of reason, or the natural understanding; it is the special gift of God, through Jesus Christ, as promised by him to his disciples, when he said unto them : " If ye love me keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."²

And now I will tell you what this Divine Principle *revealed in me.* *It showed me,* that all I had been building for twenty years past must come to the ground, and that I must begin again, and build on a foundation different from that on which I had before built; and build too with materials of a more durable nature, such as would stand the test of a fiery trial.³ For thereby I was given to see that my former building had been founded on *notions and opinions*, and not on Christ, the light within; and that the materials of which it had been constructed, were the *commandments of men*, instead of the teachings of that living Word—the Word of His grace. *It showed me also,* that whilst I had been busying myself with the concerns of others, and that too without either proper qualifications or requirements, my own had been neglected; that whilst I had been

(1) Isaiah xxviii. 5. (2) John xiv. 15, 16, 17. (3) 1 Cor. iii. 12.

labouring in the vineyard of the Lord (so called,) my own proper inheritance, the vineyard of my own heart, had been suffered to lie waste and uncultivated ; and I found that saying of the apostle verified in my experience, “ Bodily exercise profiteth little.”¹

Seeing, then, that after all my labour and toil, this was still my deplorable state, I had now no time to spare to devote to the concerns of others ; my own requiring, for awhile, the whole of my attention. For it appeared to me highly necessary, first to look at home, and see that my own affairs were well regulated, before I gave assistance to my neighbour—for charity begins at home ; and that I ought to make the best use of the time that there might be yet remaining, as there had been already so much lost, or at best, but trifled away. There was now no room for any more trifling, as the day was far spent and the night at hand. I therefore put my hand to the plough, which had begun to break up afresh the fallow-ground of my heart, and prepare it for the precious seed, that it might not be sown among thorns,² nor become unfruitful in the stony ground, or by the way side.

This, as I before observed, is *the reason* of my withdrawing from your Society—*my giving a preference to the inward light, or inward teaching, before and above all other teaching* : yet by no means despising prophesying, or the true gospel ministry. And this is what makes the difference with me now, from what I was when amongst you ; not that I was quite without religion, or that my religion was different from what it is now, for

(1) 1 Timothy iv. 8. (2) Jeremiah iv. 3.

as there is but one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism,¹ so there is but one true religion ; but, mine eyes not being properly or sufficiently anointed, I *then* saw as through a glass darkly, and built much on superficial and mistaken views; but *now* a clearer manifestation of the Principle of divine Life and Light has mercifully been *revealed in me*, and which hath done more for me than all my former teachers, for it hath led me into great quietude of soul, and into a patient waiting for Christ, wherein I have experimentally found my spiritual strength to be renewed.

I know it has been said, by some of you, that in being so still and quiet, I was burying my talent. It doubtless seemed strange to you, how a person could thus serve his Creator. So would it have seemed to me a few years ago.

Now that which prepared the way for this change in my religious views, was outward tribulation, which shook to the foundation, my former religious profession ; and I think I can testify, that trials and afflictions, when patiently endured, have, under the sanctifying influence of divine grace, a tendency to humble the soul, and to mortify pride and self-complacency. The loftiness of man must, by some means, be brought down, and the haughtiness of man be made low,² that the Lord alone may be exalted in the temple of the heart. O the depth of the wisdom and goodness of God ! O what a dangerous thing is this fleshly ease ! What need of continual watchfulness and prayer ! O what a mercy it was, that the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of

(1) Ephesians iv. 5. (2) Isaiah ii. 17.

riches were not allowed completely to choke the precious seed!—but that the fire of God's jealousy was kindled against these hindering things, and thus consumed them, in order to make room for the seed of eternal life to take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward. What an awful thing it is to be choked *with the cares of the world!* and still more dreadful to be in this state, and not know it! Sin is of a stupifying nature: and the greater the insensibility, the greater the danger. Thus it was with me once; so that, after all my former labours and exercises, I had well nigh fallen asleep in the arms of the wicked one. But the judgments of God, which in mercy followed me, aroused me out of my lethargy; and O the anguish and pain of mind I then passed through!

It was about the time of these great tribulations, that a change took place in my religious profession. It was a stripping season. My outward concerns were very harassing, and I was driven to seek for support in religion. I now began to feel more than ever, my own weakness, and the insufficiency of all those outward means, in which I had been so much engaged, to give relief to my distressed soul. The pure light would indeed, at times, spring up in my heart; though it was but transient. I opened my case to an old friend, who sympathized with me in my grief, and lent me some Friends' books to read: I saw immediately into the Principle as professed by that body, of which before I had been ignorant; or rather, I had overlooked it. Indeed, I think I can say truly that, of all professing people, I had least acquaintance with the "Friends." I had never been at any of their meetings, nor scarcely ever read or

heard anything of them; so that I was quite ignorant of them and their Principles. Indeed, I had been so carried away with, and so much occupied by, that *outward working system*, that I had scarcely time for calm reflection, or to examine the foundation on which I stood: but I was now brought to a pause, and had time to weigh and examine matters; and to judge for myself. I believed in the light within, and was persuaded it was the truth, and accordingly turned to it *alone* for direction and support. For I had already proved the insufficiency of all other means. My light now increased daily; and I soon began to see the shallowness of my former profession. I was *shown* my remaining depravity, and was surprised to find, that I had been striving so long to so little purpose; my heart was still like a cage of unclean birds. There was, therefore, a death unto self to be effected, before I could become inwardly and outwardly right. I found it necessary now to cease from my own works, which had only been feeding self, and to commune with my own heart and be still.

And here let me observe that, by laying so much stress upon the appearance of Christ in the heart, I would not be understood, by any means, to undervalue the belief in the great importance of His coming in the flesh. For I do believe in his outward appearance in Judea. That the Word or Son of God, in the fulness of time, took flesh, descended and came of the seed of Abraham and David;¹ but was miraculously conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin

(1) Romans i. 8.

Mary.¹ That He fulfilled all righteousness;² and through the offering of his body once for all,³ "put away sin;"⁴ and "by whom we have now received the atonement!"⁵ And further, He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."⁶ "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."⁷ He ascended up on high, "led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."⁸ "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."⁹

On the 6th of 5th month, 1821, being the First day of the week, I went, for the first time, to the Friends' Meeting. Here I felt my soul refreshed and encouraged, and was fully convinced of the excellency of silent worship; how admirably it is adapted for preparing the soul for the reception of divine light and life, which constitute the essence of true Spiritual worship. The testimony of one who spoke, very much suited my case: his opening words were—"The cries of the poor, and the sighings of the contrite, reach the ears of the Almighty. In all their sinkings down and lifting up, the Lord is the helper of the helpless." In the afternoon we had a silent meeting, but therein I felt divine peace flow in my heart, which left my mind under a

(1) Matt. i. 25. (2) Matt. iii. 15. (3) Heb. x. 10. (4) Heb. ix. 26.

(5) Rom. v. 11. (6) Rom. i. 4. (7) Rom. iv. 25. (8) Eph. iv. 8.

(9) 1 Tim. iii. 16.

sweet calm. How insignificant and unprofitable would such a way of worship have appeared to me a few years ago, when I was full of my own ways and workings! But "the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner."¹

✓ The day after I had been at Friends' meeting, I waited on the superintendent preacher, and returned my class-paper, and gave up my office as leader. He was very reluctant in admitting my resignation, and used many arguments to turn me back, and came after me to my house. He said the Quakers were refined Deists, that they denied the atonement, rejected the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, and he could not see how it was possible for them to be saved. I replied, that I did not believe they denied the atonement of Christ; and, with respect to the ordinances he had mentioned, I believed if a person could obtain the end without the use of those outward forms, they could not be considered essential to salvation. He admitted that they were not absolutely necessary to salvation, and afterwards acknowledged that the Friends were a moral and spiritually minded people. But, said he, if all were to be so quiet, what would become of the untaught multitude?* We at last parted very friendly; and as he was going out he said, "You may be right, and I may be wrong."

I had, after this, several interviews with many others of my old acquaintance. And, on one of these occasions, I met two leaders, one of whom reproached me for having "run away from the Society wherein I had received

(1) Luke xx. 17.

* For an answer to this question see chap. iv.

all my good." I replied, "I am quite satisfied with the change I have made; I have neither left my Master, nor taken a leap in the dark, but it has been in obedience to the light." This seemed to silence him who first addressed me. The other then turned round and said, "I will stand by him, it is we who are wrong, for we are no better than Roman Catholics."

After this I met with another old acquaintance, who, for a long time, had been suffering under a nervous affection, brought on by too much exertion, in singing, praying, and other similar exercises. He was brought down so low, and so much debilitated in body and mind, as to be incapable of pursuing those exercises any longer, or even of hearing sermons. Thus he was, in a measure, brought to see and to feel his own weakness and helplessness in a spiritual sense. He acknowledged he had never yet met with any one that could reach his case, or afford him any help. I thought his state very much resembled what I had formerly passed through; and occasioned too by the very same cause.

Behold the effects of this working system! Many there are who injure their health, by doing that which, I believe, God never required at their hands. And alas! few have erred more in this way than the writer of these remarks. These run before they are sent, and become busy-bodies, working in their own will and time. Such bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness, the inward principle, is profitable unto all things, even the health of the body as well as that of the soul, "having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."⁽ⁱ⁾

(i) 1 Tim. iv. 8,

I had, at first, some doubts about giving up the ordinances of baptism, and the supper; but as I found the substance could be obtained without the use of these outward forms, my scruples soon gave way. I do indeed believe, that the spiritual dispensation of the Christian religion, *supersedes the necessity of outward rites and ceremonies*. John was sent to baptize; but in speaking of the dispensation he had received, in reference to that of Christ's, says, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”¹ And Paul said, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.”² Those, therefore, who come to experience Christ's baptism, the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, which purifies the floor of the heart, and burns up the chaffy nature, will not need the sprinkling of the face with water.

And with respect to the supper, Christ saith to every believing soul, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”³ He therefore who receives Christ in the heart, and there sups with him, will have no need to use the outward sign of bread and wine. And this agrees with the dying testimony of a devout woman among the Methodists, who, being near her end, was asked by her husband, if she should like the sacrament administered unto her. She replied, “What need? I have the substance within.”

I do believe, that all who diligently hearken to the Inward Teacher, and follow his leadings and guidance, will soon learn, *that all types and ceremonies are to be done away with, at the inward appearing of Christ, the antitype.*

(1) John iii. 30. (2) 1 Cor. x. 17. (3) Rev. viii. 20.

I can truly say that my heart was prepared for this great change in my religious profession. I was indeed filled, to surfeiting, with my own ways; and a great rest *it* was to my poor soul, when I saw into this *more excellent way*, this inward work, this godliness which is profitable unto all things. For I had had enough of bodily exercise, which had profited me little, but on the contrary, had nearly destroyed both health of body and peace of mind. I owe it, therefore, to the cause of truth, to say, that this change has been a great blessing to me. If my testimony should be disbelieved, I cannot help it; I consider it my duty to make this declaration, without equivocation or reserve.

And it is my sincere desire that both you and I may be preserved in an humble watchful state of mind, wholly dependent upon the ever blessed Author and Finisher of our faith, until it shall please Him, whose we are and whom we ought to serve in all things, by death to remove us from works to rewards; unto whom alone belong all the glory and the praise.

CHAP. III.

REMARKS ON MY EXPERIENCE WHILST IN CONNECTION WITH THE METHODISTS.

I WAS brought up according to the profession of the Established Church, and was required by my parents to attend to all its forms and ordinances. At a very early period of life, I was, in some measure, convinced of the evil nature of sin, and at times, brought to feel something of the terrors of a guilty conscience; but I did not fall in with these gracious visitations until about the eighteenth year of my age, when I began to feel, in a more especial manner, the drawings of divine love; and about this period, there was frequently raised in my heart, a desire to flee from the wrath to come. Religion then appeared to be the one thing needful, and I began to lead a new life, endeavouring to break off my sins by repentance; striving particularly against a certain habit, which, at that time, was my easily besetting sin. I made many vows and resolutions, and attended to divers religious duties; but all these proved ineffectual; for no sooner did temptation present itself, than I was carried away as by a torrent.

I continued for some time in this way, sinning and repenting; and was frequently, through distress of mind,

brought down very low; for there were indeed many circumstances which tended to impress on my mind more strongly, my lost and undone condition. I now began to converse much with professors of various denominations, and to inquire diligently the right way. About this time I became acquainted with a Methodist, with whom I frequently conversed on the subject of religion. At one of these seasons, when speaking on the necessity of a change of heart, the following passage of Scripture was quoted:—" Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."⁽¹⁾ These words fastened on my mind, and I wondered I had not noticed this passage before. I saw plainly I had not as yet experienced this change, and that it was this which I wanted to enable me to overcome sin. And when I was told that a person might know assuredly that his sins were forgiven him, I was quite surprised; for I had not been accustomed to hear such experience held forth as attainable in this life. I therefore felt a determination of mind, not to rest until I had obtained this blessing.

I now began to pray without the form of words: I earnestly besought God for this salvation. I began also to go to the Methodist-meetings; and on the fourth of the First month 1802, I attended the evening preaching at Oldham Street Chapel. My mind had been under a serious impression the whole of the day; and on my way to the chapel, I felt a belief raised in my heart, that I should, that evening, obtain the blessing which I had desired and sought. I felt something of shame on

(1) John iii. 3.

entering the chapel, and sat down on one of the first seats I came to. But I had not been there long, before my mind was covered with a solemn awe ; I felt something indescribable affecting my heart ;—a deep sense of guilt and condemnation rested on me. I cried to the Lord for mercy. He heard, and answered my prayer. All my uneasiness was removed, and I felt peace and joy spring up in my heart. I paid but little attention to the preacher, being inwardly engaged ; I therefore returned home, not with much knowledge of the sermon, but with the love of God shed abroad in my heart,⁽¹⁾ so that I could praise the Lord as on the banks of deliverance.

I had not long frequented the class-meeting, before I became a member of the Methodist Society. I now attended their different religious meetings, and was soon entered on the plans as a prayer leader. But alas ! my experience was very shallow ; and being ignorant of the devices of Satan, I was, through unwatchfulness, carried away with a zeal which was not according to knowledge. Had I, instead of depending upon man, attended more to that Divine Gift which first opened and enlightened my mind, discovering my lost state, and then comforting me with an assurance of divine favour, *I believe I should have escaped much suffering, brought on me by my own misconduct* ; some of which will hereafter be detailed. For I must acknowledge, that during a great part of the time I was connected with the Methodists, there had been much deviation from what is right ; and the chief cause of this deviation, I believe was, *the*

(1) Romans v. 5.

following too much that outward system of religion, which consisteth chiefly in works carried on in the will of the creature, to the great neglect of the voice of Wisdom, the internal Guide. And moreover I believe, that these sufferings were permitted *to show me my own deficiencies.*

But having left the true Guide, and allowed myself to be too much led by men, my mind was brought into bondage to their ordinances ; and, in the forwardness of my still unrenewed heart, I ran before I was sent, exercising in prayer-meetings, and speaking in band-meetings ; and instead of keeping in lowness of mind, I was puffed up with spiritual pride, and became vain in my imagination, and my foolish heart was darkened. There was, in this state, no feeding in green pastures, by the still waters,¹ whither the Good Shepherd leads forth the lambs of his flock. No, my heart became comparable to "the heath in the desert, which seeth not when good cometh."²

In one of my dejected seasons, my aunt said to me, "Joseph, where are the fruits of all your love-feasts ? I do not see that your religion has made you a happier man than you were before you changed your profession. You have now been trying hard in your new way, for three years, but I believe you were a better man before than you are now." This was a home stroke at my high pharisaical profession ; yet I was unable to make any reply to these plain and pointed reproofs, which were uttered in a meek and gentle spirit ; for I was convinced that my gloomy and dejected appearance did not at all recommend my religion. My uncle also was, at times,

(1) Psalm xxiii. 2. (2) Jeremiah xvii. 6.

much concerned about me ; for I was not so helpful to him in his business, as I formerly had been. Indeed my religion seemed to disqualify me for business, so that I became rather a burden to him than otherwise. I once heard him say, when some individuals were trying to laugh me out of my notions, "He is passing through a cloud." And so I was ; and a dark cloud too ; for I had been labouring hard to make myself righteous, and got only gloom and sadness for my pains.

My path, at this time, was through a dark and dreary wilderness, in which I had little or no light. And when the Lord was pleased, occasionally to revive his work, his visitations were like "the morning cloud, or early dew;"⁽¹⁾ they soon passed away. My religion was indeed very shallow. I found I had still a heart "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;"⁽²⁾ and knew not how to look for that further work of sanctification, which I had so often read of, and heard from the pulpit. Therefore, after striving in my own strength, and seeking for it in an outward way, without effect, I at length settled down in this impure state, despairing of ever attaining unto such a state of perfection in this life. I had not, at this time, been turned to the light within, and taught to hearken to the still small voice, and to abide the appearance of Christ as a refiner's fire and fuller's soap. Yet in some of my seasons of retirement, I was visited with that inshining light, discovering unto me the depravity of my own heart ; but instead of submitting thereunto, and becoming a co-worker therewith, I quenched the Holy Spirit, and silenced

(1) Hosea xiii. 3. (2) Jeremiah xvii. 9.

this divine Teacher, by mixing in noisy meetings, which fed pride and self, and obstructed the silent and effectual workings of the Holy Ghost.

The most noisy of these meetings were those carried on in the Band Room, a place so called from the term band meetings, which still form a prominent part of the discipline of Methodism. But—*these meetings held in the Band Room*—were of a public and proselyting character, and not under the control of the preachers.* Of such meetings there were two in the week; one on Sixth day evening, and the other on First day afternoon. That on Sixth day evening, was composed of the leading men, and was called the *Revival Band*. At this meeting each individual spoke his experience in succession: all of which was carried on with much excited feeling, and great noise. I remember going to one of these meetings, in a calm and composed state of mind, having been previously reading a religious book, with which I had been much edified. In telling my own experience, I mentioned the state my mind was in on entering the meeting; observing, that that peace and serenity which I had brought with me, had entirely left me, and that I then felt much confused, and very uncomfortable. In consequence of what I had said, I was set down as one seeking head knowledge. There was a young man of my acquaintance who sometimes attended these meetings, who, on one of these occasions, said that he felt his mind very low and much dejected. But this sort

* Those unacquainted with the discipline of Methodism will please to bear in mind this distinction betwixt "Band Meetings" and the *Band Room Meetings*.

of experience did not suit Revivalists ; they therefore gathered round him, and began praying for him, and endeavoured to get him lifted up. And whilst thus engaged, one of the leading men said, " I never knew any one make anything out as a revivalist, who needed so often to be lifted up in this way."

The meeting on First day afternoon was of a more public character ; and the room was generally filled with people of all sorts, men, women, and children : several of whom were strangers, some doubtless attracted by curiosity. This meeting was carried on in the same disorderly way as the other ; and indeed more so, there being more persons publicly engaged in it. Any one who chose, was allowed to speak or pray publicly : in this respect there was little or no restraint. And these meetings were carried on, for three, four, and sometimes five hours ; several individuals being engaged in praying and speaking at the same time : some in one part of the room, and some in another.

Well was it for me, that my connection with this Meeting was but of short duration ; for when the *Band Room Meeting* was separated from the old Society, I escaped going with those who were disowned. Several of the leading men amongst them, afterwards became quite abandoned characters : some gave up to drunkenness, and others became disreputable tradesmen ; and indeed there were very few that I knew, who ultimately prospered, or were considered of good repute.

How strikingly and awfully illustrative of these things, is the declaration of Gamaliel ; " For if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought.

but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."¹ Although there is, at the present time, a Society of this people still remaining, under the denomination of Independent Methodists; yet the character of the Society is much altered; as they are now, comparatively, a sober-minded, orderly, and quiet people. But shame and confusion have covered those who were prominently engaged in these disorderly assemblies, and this work *has* come to nought; for the "Revival Band" is now without either *name* or *place* in the town of Manchester.

This Band Room Meeting having become so disgraceful and unmanageable, the preachers at length considered it right to interfere. For this Meeting was, by its influence, spreading disorder and confusion throughout town and country. In order, therefore, to prevent this, the preachers proposed, that one of their own body should always preside at the public meeting held on First day afternoon. To this proposition the leading men of the Band Room objected; and hence arose the division which soon afterwards took place.

Notwithstanding all the confusion and the baneful effects of these meetings, such was the delusion or infatuation of many, that this way, or the Revival as it was generally termed, was looked upon by them as the *glory* of Methodism. I will not take upon me to say that no good resulted to any who laboured in these meetings, but I do believe that the chief actors therein neglected, in their speaking and praying, to wait for the movement of the Holy Spirit; so *they ran before the*

(1) *Acts v. 39.*

True Guide, and self became the predominant principle. However, it is but justice to the Methodists, as a body, to say, that although very many were carried away with this delusion, or false zeal; yet the majority of the Society, the most sober minded and respectable part of it, disapproved of such proceedings.

With respect to the conversions reported to have taken place at some of these Revival meetings, I must say, that I had, at the time, doubts on my mind as to the reality of some of them. And although I never was much engaged in this part of the work, I acknowledge I went much too far in it. I feel it right to declare, that as far as I did go therein, I acted wrong. The truth and reality of conversion is to be proved by the fruits of righteousness, in the life and conversation, and not by a few words of confession, extorted from some poor deluded creatures, wrought upon by fear, who were sometimes so confused, that they scarcely knew what they said. O how different from this, is that silent and effectual work of regeneration, brought about by the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit in the secret of the heart; turning and converting the individual from the error of his way, unto a newness of life!

It is recorded that when Elijah the prophet stood on Mount Horeb, "the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a

still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave, and behold there came a voice unto him and said, What doest thou here Elijah?"¹

This is the voice unto which man is still required to hearken; and which can only be heard in stillness and silence: not amidst the tumult of the passions, which are not unfitly comparable to the wind, the earthquake, and the fire. When the work of grace first commences its operations in the heart, it sometimes occasions great commotion, and the voice of the Lord cannot be distinctly heard until all this has subsided and is made still. The Lord, when speaking to the Church by the prophet Isaiah, says, "Keep silence before me, O Islands, and let the people renew their strength: let them come near, then let them speak; let us come near together to judgment."² How well would it be for all those who are afar off, (and I think all who are engaged in such noisy and disorderly proceedings may be considered of this sort,) how well would it be for such, to keep silence before the Lord, and to allow this rebellious and disorderly spirit to be judged down by the light of Truth within! And when they are brought near, then in fear and reverence let them speak; for there is no need of shouting so loud as though the Lord was afar off, for he is nigh to such as reverently fear him, even in the heart of him that believeth.³

O the blessedness of this inward silence, in which the voice of Christ is heard, saying to the wind and waters

(1) 1 Kings xix. 13. (2) Isaiah xli. 1. (3) Romans x, 5.

of tumultuous passions—" Peace, be still!"¹ Well might the disciples, on that memorable occasion when Christ uttered these words, have wondered, saying one to another, " What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him!"² Nothing but the all-powerful voice of Christ can effect this stillness and calmness of the passions, which, in their unsubdued and unconverted state, are " like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."³

" Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have at my hands; ye shall lie down in sorrow."⁴ Ah! my friends, has not this scripture been fulfilled in the experience of many of us? How often have we been carried away with this natural heat, wherein self has been predominant! And have we not proved it true, that after this false fire has subsided, and we have come to calm reflection; instead of peace, there has been confusion, and instead of joy, our portion has been sorrow? And has not this always been owing to the want of attention to the secret movement of the *Holy Spirit*, which helpeth our infirmities?⁵ What disorder, to the disgrace of true religion, has there been in many meetings, for want of attending to this true Guide! Instead of the spirits of some who have spoken and prayed publicly, being kept in subjection, they have been carried away into confusion and rant. And however

(1) Mark iv. 39. (2) Mark iv. 41. (3) Isaiah lvi. 21. (4) Isaiah l. 11.
(5) Romans viii. 26.

much some may have commended this way, or meetings of this sort, it still remaineth true, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets; for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."¹ O, how important then is it to attend to the voice of the true Shepherd, which leadeth to peace; but the voice of the stranger leadeth to sorrow and distress !

There is no part of my conduct whilst in connection with the Methodists, on which I look back with more dissatisfaction, than the part I took in these meetings; although it was by no means a leading part, for I was then but young and rather diffident. But when I think of the light and irreverent manner in which the name of the Lord was made use of, in the solemn act of prayer, and speaking of experience, so called, I have no hesitation in saying, that the name of God was thereby profaned. I will venture further to declare, that I believe I was then under a strong delusion, and that those disorderly workings were produced by the operation of the devil on the unrenewed part in me—they could not have been of God, as he is not "the author of confusion but of peace."

I cannot close this short sketch of the Band Room Meeting, without adverting to the serious misapplication of the term *revival* of religion, as applying to such a work as that I have described. And although I trust there is not now so much of that *wildfire*, (if I may be allowed the expression,) as there formerly was; yet I cannot help thinking that the term *Revival* is still much mis-

(1) 1 Corinthians xiv. 33.

applied. I have read some accounts of Camp Meetings in America, which to me are appalling. I would submit to the sober-minded the necessity of caution in the use of the word *Revival*. That work cannot be worthy the designation of a revival of religion, which produces disorder, confusion, darkness, sorrow, and distress. A revival of true religion will produce its correspondent fruits—which are *meekness, gentleness, goodness, order, quietness, assurance and peace*.

In the year 1806, I began to exercise a little in preaching ; and after a regular trial, became what is called amongst the Methodists, a local preacher. I cannot say that my movement to this work was clearly from the divine Source, neither will I say, that I was at all times without a divine influence ; but I acknowledge there was too much of self in the act. Sometimes my mind was a little opened and led into my subject ; at other times all has been dark, and I have been much confused.

I continued on the “plans” a few years ; and at length, through ill health, was obliged to give it up altogether. For in consequence of my going to such extremes, in these outward workings in the will of the creature, and by bodily austerities, I had nearly destroyed myself. My health became much impaired, which ended in a long intermittent fever. I went into the country, to my father’s house, and was a long while in a very weak state, supposed by my friends to be in a decline. And I myself thought, at one time, that I should never recover. Doctors could do but little for me ; but with

the care of my parents, and the benefit of good air; and more than all, *ceasing from that bodily and mental exertion in religious duties*, so called, I began gradually to recover strength. During this illness, I was generally very low spirited, seldom favoured with any sensible feeling of joy; but my mind was often clouded with doubts and fears. By this dispensation, my false rest and self confidence were, in some measure, broken up, and I was led to depend more and more on Him, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, and who is a very present help in time of trouble. I withdrew from these public exertions; and spent much of my leisure time in reading, and occasionally taking a solitary walk in the fields and lanes.

For several years after this, I remained only a private member of the Society; attending the preachings, and the class. And I can truly say, that my mind was much more comfortable, whilst thus a solitary and private individual, than when I was more publicly engaged; for I had more peace, and felt a stronger drawing in secret, than I had done before; although accounted a backslider, because I could not work as I formerly had done. I long resisted solicitations again to become a class leader, and refused the Superintendent, when he waited on me for that purpose.* But I had, before, been quite dissatisfied with my work as a leader. I declare, that frequently when I have gone to meet my class, and stood before them, I have felt a need of being led and helped myself: and sometimes have been so shut up, that I have scarcely known what to say to the people: all has been quite formal on my part, and I have been glad when the work

* However I did for a short time before I left, again take charge of a class.

was done. And if at any time I complained of this my inability, I was told that I must be instant in season, and out of season; that I must work whether I felt inclined thereto or not; or indeed, whether or not I was assisted by the Spirit. O what a yoke of bondage is this! and how contrary to that saying of Christ, “Without me ye can do nothing.”¹ I had not then been taught, that I must wait upon the Lord for power to do any work which he might require of me; and that I ought to have tarried until I was so endued with power from on high. I do now believe, *that in the work of the Lord, no man can do anything aright in his own will, or in his own time; but only in the will and time of the Lord his Master, when he is pleased by his Spirit to move him thereto.* And such work as is done in the ability which He giveth, will be blessed by Him. Whithersoever the Spirit goeth, man must go, and when it standeth still, he must stand still, as is clearly shown by the vision of the wheels in Ezekiel.²

And although I may have occasionally felt a little assistance in speaking to the members of the class, as I had sometimes been favoured to feel in preaching, yet I believe I had not sufficient ground for entering upon so very important a work; for I am persuaded it is much better in such cases *to wait in silence until ability is given, and there is an evident movement thereto*, which the humble and attentive disciple of Christ understands. And if the Lord and Master sees meet, he will not be wanting in thus moving his chosen and prepared instruments. And should there be no need for it, there will be the pres-

(1) John xv. 5. (2) Ezekiel i. 21.

ence of the Master himself, who hath said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”¹ *He can instruct and bless his people, either with or without instruments.* He is the Good Shepherd that feedeth his flock; and his sheep “know his voice, and follow him, and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.”²

I am aware, that waiting for a divine movement, or tarrying till endued with power from on high, is not in accordance with the recorded sentiments of John Wesley; nor is it agreeable to the usual custom amongst Methodists generally. But is it not in accordance with the Scriptures? Did not our Lord command his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high?³ And are not the Scriptures full of exhortations to wait upon the Lord? And are not those who wait upon him promised that they shall renew their strength?⁴ If the word *wait* signifies to attend in expectation, then to wait upon the Lord must mean to attend upon him in expectation of receiving the communications of his Spirit, *which will teach what to do, and how to do it.*

I believe Paul’s words, “be instant in season, out of season,” have been much perverted; for the same apostle who gave this charge to Timothy, said also; “We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”⁵ If then Paul could not pray

(1) Matt. xviii. 20. (2) John x. 5. (3) Luke xxiv. 49. (4) Isa. xlvi. 31.
(5) Romans viii. 26.

aright without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, neither could he preach aright without this divine aid : for I think it must be admitted, that to perform these duties acceptably, divine assistance is needed for the one as well as for the other. I conclude, therefore, that Paul could not mean that Timothy should preach whether he felt divine assistance or not ; or that he should not wait for the movement of the Holy Spirit : but it appears to me that the apostle meant by the words, "in season, out of season," that a faithful testimony should be borne according to truth, *whether it was received or rejected.*

Here then falls to the ground, that sentiment so much prevailing, and so much acted upon, that a minister of the Gospel may and ought, if in health, to preach at the time and place he is appointed to by man, whether he feels a divine movement or not, or whether or not he is assisted by the Holy Spirit. I do indeed know that the true worship which God accepts, and rewards, is to be *in spirit and in truth* ; in the silence of all flesh, in a total cessation from all the runnings and willings of the creature, waiting in stillness for the movement, and ability for the soul to breathe to its Creator, and rightly to perform any act which may be required. As the preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord,¹ so therefore no prayer nor preaching can be acceptable to God, but that which He inspires by his Holy Spirit. O the blessedness of this truly Spiritual work, this labouring in the vineyard of the heart ! Man only enters into true rest of soul, when he ceases from his own works. It is the de-

(1) Proverbs xvi. 1.

generate plant of self that spoils all : let this be rooted out, and then there will be room for the Plant of renown, the precious Tree of life, which is in the midst of the garden of God, to grow and flourish and bring forth the fruit of righteousness to the praise and glory of His great and excellent name.

CHAP. IV.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TURNING THE ATTENTION TO THE LIGHT WITHIN.

IF the light within be that divine gift which our Lord Jesus Christ promised to send unto his disciples;¹ if it be that Spirit of Truth, which is to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,² and also to guide into all truth;³ if it be the appointed Way of salvation,⁴ the *means* by which man comes to the knowledge of his fallen and sinful state, and by which he is redeemed from all iniquity;⁵ if it be the *Foundation* of all religious knowledge, without which man can never know himself, nor know Him whom to know is life eternal:⁶ if the salvation of those who are arrived at years of religious consideration, depends on *faith in* and *obedience to* this “Unction from the Holy One”—then to turn the attention thereunto, and to hearken diligently to this divine Teacher, must, of all things, be of the greatest importance.

What will all the preachings of man avail, where this inward teaching is neglected? Verily nothing at

(1) John xvi. 7. (2) John xvi. 8. (3) John xvi. 13. (4) Titus ii. 11.
(5) Psalm cxxx. 8. (6) 1 John ii. 20.

all; for it is Christ that teacheth as never man taught, and he alone can teach to profit. If we have never yet been brought into a state of mind, similar to that in which the children of Israel were, when the commandment went forth, "*Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord,*"¹ a very important part of true religion remains to be learned. If we have not been brought to see our own utter helplessness, and that without Christ we can do nothing; if we are not divested of self-confidence, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness, we can scarcely be said to have made one straight forward step in the true way of life. "*Be still and know that I am God,*"² is a divine commandment; as also, "*Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength,*"³ Happy indeed are they who are favoured to get into this state of stillness; this silence from all the reasonings and cogitations of the fleshly mind, in which there is true peace. It is this retirement of soul that constitutes the most precious part of a religious life. In this state of stillness and prostration of soul, the heart is prepared for true spiritual worship. Here the voice of the Shepherd is known and distinguished from the voice of the stranger; and the soul enjoys a sweet calm, a heavenly rest, a peace which passeth all understanding. It is in the secret of the heart that true wisdom is learned; here the will of the Lord is made manifest: "*Commune with your own heart, upon your bed, and be still.*"⁴

I am aware that this silence and stillness is not much encouraged by the Methodists. Indeed that system of

(1) Exodus xiv. 13. (2) Psalm xlii. 10. (3) Isaiah xlii. 1. (4) Psalm xvi. 4.

ceaseless outward operation, and that excessive bodily exercise in religious duties, as they are called, have a very powerful tendency in keeping the mind aloof from this most desirable state. I do believe, that when the tongue is still, the heart may be profitably engaged in true spiritual worship. And how important is this silence in preparing the soul to attend to the still small voice within !

Some years ago a class leader told me that he thought there was, amongst the Methodists, " too much preaching, and too little reflection." I think, with respect to the latter, it must be admitted that there are many, who are so engaged with creaturely exertions, that they know very little of the true state of their own hearts. I will give you an instance of this, which came under my own immediate observation. I remember, when at a public Band Meeting, a leader, in telling his experience, said that he felt profited in public meetings, such as preachings, class meetings, and prayer meetings; but he could find no profit in private prayer. And being at a loss to know the cause of this, he asked one of the preachers, who presided at the meeting, to give him herein his advice. This individual was one whom I then highly esteemed, as a zealous and honest man. But if he had known anything of the inward teaching, he would not have been ignorant concerning the duty of private prayer. The True Leader would have shown him, that he ought to have been brought to know his wants; and to have waited until ability had been given him, to breathe, in supplication and thanksgiving to his Maker. He would then have learned, that he might have worshiped in secret, without utter-

ing a word ; and have found it profitable, and thereby have had his spiritual strength renewed. And if he had been so taught, he would have had no need of asking advice of a preacher, having a *better Counsellor within*.

What an awful consideration is this, that a person should be appointed to lead others, who does not know the way, himself ! who does not know how to perform aright, one of the most important duties of religion ! I do not mention this as a general case ; I hope there are many who have been better instructed, having learned wisdom in the school of Christ, the true teacher. But I wish I were able to say that I believed this to be a solitary case : I know it to be very like what my case was, when so circumstanced, and so engaged.

O ye desolate ones ! ye who are sighing and crying for the abominations that be done in the midst ;¹ ye who have been given to see and feel the plague of your own hearts ; ye who have felt the burthen of human ordinances ; ye who have been filled to surfeiting, with your own ways—O that I could prevail upon you to turn to Christ, the light within ! He can give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. I invite you, my dear friends, to come into this inner court. Be no longer outer-court worshippers. If Christ, the Son, make you free, ye shall be free indeed.² Ye will then be no longer subject to the ordinances and commandments of men ;³ ye will have but one master, and he will teach you the lessons of salvation *freely*, without money, and without price.” “ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no

(1) Ezekiel ix. 4.

(2) John viii. 36.

(3) Col. ii. 20.

money : come ye, buy and eat : yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Hearken diligently unto me ; and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live : and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, *a Leader and Commander to the people.*"¹

Do not we here see our glorious liberty, and who is appointed our leader ? Why then do we allow ourselves, in religious matters, to be led and commanded by men ? Jesus said, " Neither be ye called masters ; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."² Although, in temporal matters, they that are servants are commanded to obey, in all lawful and reasonable things, their own masters according to the flesh ; yet, in religious services, none are required to move by the order or appointment of men. For, as the qualification for religious services is of the Lord, so of him also is the appointment.

I feel no desire to set myself up for anything, but rather to lie low as a little child ; yet, I trust, I feel willing to be accounted anything or nothing, so that I may be a feeble instrument of inducing some of you, whom I love, to turn more fully to Christ the light within ; for having, thereby, received so much benefit myself, I can truly and honestly recommend the same to you. And

(1) Isaiah iv. 4.

(2) Matthew xxiii. 10.

this is not after a short experience herein ; for although the period has not yet been quite so long as that spent with you ; nevertheless, I have been long enough to have tried this way. I have tried it, and do know, indeed, that it is the right way, and the *only right way*. For Jesus Christ hath declared, “ I am the way, and the truth, and the life : no man cometh to the Father, but by me.”¹

Some have said, that this inward teaching may be good and right for those who have attained unto a good measure of spiritual-mindedness, but what is to be done with the untaught multitude ? I answer, Point them also to Christ, this Inward Teacher ; as they cannot be better directed ;* for it is written, “ The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men ;”² therefore is it a common privilege. And where is the man to be found, whether Christian, Jew, Turk, or Heathen, who has not, by this inward light, been taught the knowledge of right and wrong ?” For, as the lightning, out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven ; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.”³ And the Apostle Paul, speaking also of this *universal teaching*, saith : “ But I say, have they not heard ? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.”⁴ Indeed, if there be any less susceptible than others, of this divine teaching, excepting in the case of reprobates, *it is those whose minds are chiefly taken up with the outward part of religion*. It is plain that the publi-

* See page 14.

(1) John xiv. 6. (2) Titus ii. 11. (3) Luke xvii. 24. (4) Romans x. 18.

can in the temple was more under the influence of this teaching than the pharisee, and consequently went down to his house justified rather than the other.¹

The inward teaching therefore, is that in which consisteth the chief glory of the Christian religion ; that in which it surpasses all previous dispensations. Jesus Christ testified of John the Baptist, saying, “ Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist : but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”² And with this agrees the following figurative language of the prophet Isaiah ; “ And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established *in the top* of the mountains, and shall be exalted *above* the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.”³

How much then do we suffer loss, by not placing the inward teaching above all other teaching ! I am persuaded that they who thus become disciples of Christ, and learn of him, will make more progress in true wisdom, than they otherwise would, by attending, though ever so diligently, the preachings of men. Nevertheless, I do not wish to be understood as despising prophesying, or preaching in the demonstration of the Spirit ; for I do acknowledge this kind of preaching to be of divine appointment, and to be very profitable. Yet however excellent, or useful it be, as a means, the inward and immediate teaching of the Spirit is more so, inasmuch as it is the spring from which all true gospel ministry flows.

(1) Luke xviii. 14. (2) Luke vii. 28. (3) Isaiah ii. 2.

O that they, who are labouring so hard, in the will of the creature, in observing the ordinances and commandments of men, did but know how impossible it is for them whilst in this state, rightly to worship God, as Christ himself hath declared: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."⁽¹⁾ Whatever means or instruments may therefore be made use of, the glory of man's salvation belongs to Christ, the anointed of God; and besides him there is no Saviour. Then let us give him all the glory, to whom it is due; let him, in all things, have the pre-eminence. Let us attend to his teaching before all other teaching; and let us heed no other teaching but what agreeth with this inward witness. What need then of being so much subject to the teachings of men, when the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is written on the fleshly tables of the heart; and which, if attended to, may be read and known of all men?

In confirmation of the importance of this inward *Divine Teaching*, I subjoin the following testimonies, published in your own Magazine.—

I. JOHN BAUSALL.—"If mankind were to hear and obey the voice of the Spirit of God, they need not the teachings of men. If the sheep of the Lord's pasture hearken and obey the voice of the good Shepherd and follow him, he will lead them into green pastures. It was the concern of the ministers of Christ in the morning of the gospel day, to turn men from darkness unto light, from Satan unto God, and from the teachings

(1) Matthew xv. 9.

of men unto the word of God ; the engrafted word to which they bore testimony was able to save the soul, that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God alone. This is the rock upon which the Church of Christ is built, and against which the gates of hell are not able to prevail. There is no other foundation can be laid than what is already laid, viz. Christ Jesus, the wisdom and power of God, the divine light that enlighteneth every man coming into the world. Those that walk in this heavenly light become the children of the light, and of the day, in whom there is no cause of stumbling."—*Arminian Magazine*, 1792, page 164.

II. WILLIAM LAW.—" All depends upon thy right submission and obedience to the speaking of God in thy soul. Stop, therefore, all self-activity, listen not to the suggestions of thy own reason, run not on in thy own will, but be retired, silent, passive, and humbly attentive to this new risen light within thee. Open thy heart, thy eyes, and ears, to all its impressions. Let it enlighten, teach, frighten, torment, judge, and condemn thee, as it pleases ; turn not away from it, hear all it says, seek for no relief out of it, consult not with flesh and blood, but with a heart full of faith and resignation to God, pray only this prayer, that God's kingdom may come, and his will be done *in thy soul*. Stand faithfully in this state of preparation, thus given up to the Spirit of God, and then the work of thy repentance will be wrought in God, and thou wilt soon find, that he that is in thee, is much greater than all that are against thee."—*Arminian Mag.* 1793, page 217.

III. REBECCA SCUDAMORE, in a letter to one of her intimate friends, says ; " I wish, my dear Mrs. —— to acquaint our friend, that I am persuaded it is no less than a divine operation on his heart, whereby he is so deeply convinced of his fallen state. I congratulate him whom the Lord doth and will bless, by enriching with the graces of the Holy Spirit. I have but one solicitude concerning him, and that is that he may truly submit to that divine precept we find on record : *Be still and know that I am God.* It is of the utmost consequence that *we silently attend to the secret whispers of that voice which speaks in the deep of our hearts ; and when attended to, in due time, speaks ineffable peace.* It puts to silence all other voices, howsoever pleasing they may appear to our corrupted nature. I entreat and beseech, that he would fear nothing so much, as the not *listening to this heavenly voice.* Indeed it is, and will be, a lamp to our path, and a light to our feet." — *Arminian Magazine, 1793, page 360.*

CHAP. V.

THE SCRIPTURES.

“ What advantage then hath the Jew ? or what profit is there of circumcision ? Much every way : chiefly, because unto them were committed the oracles of God.”¹

The Apostle Paul, in the preceding chapter, draws a comparison between the state of the Jews and that of the Gentiles, showing, that although the Gentiles were without an *outward* written law, yet were they not left without the means of salvation ; but that they had a law *written in their hearts*, unto which they were accountable, and according to which they would be judged. For saith he, “ Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil ; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But glory, honour, and praise, to every man that worketh good ; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile : for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law ; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law ; for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the

(1) Romans iii. 1.

law, are a law unto themselves : which show the work of the law written *in their hearts*, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.¹

We see then that the Scriptures confer an advantage; but the want of them may not prevent salvation. They are a law, but not the universal law. They are a rule of conduct, but not that which applies unto all mankind; seeing all are not favoured with the knowledge thereof. They are a guide, but not the infallible and unerring guide, since it is possible to mistake the meaning of them, or there may be a mistake in some part of the translation, or printing of them. They are a valuable standard of faith and practice; but there is a more sure word of prophecy, unto which they bear testimony, whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts.²

And that a person may mistake the meaning of the Scriptures, John Wesley himself admits. "And perhaps," says he, "this ignorance may be occasioned by ignorant commentators." And he further adds, "that ignorance must be removed, before we can remove the darkness arising from it. We must show the true meaning of the texts which have been misunderstood."

What then ! Is man indeed, in the all-important concern of the soul, left to the guidance of his fellow man, who, according to John Wesley's own showing, may be mistaken : as some men in writing commentaries have misunderstood the meaning of the Scrip-

(1) Romans ii. 15. (2) 2 Peter i. 19.

tures, and thereby led others into error and darkness! No verily, every man has, within him, a more sure and unerring guide than this, unto which he will do well to take heed, and then he will not be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.¹

The Scriptures are a great comfort and help to the faithful, in that they show forth the experience of Saints in former ages, but they are not the Foundation of the church. They contain the *words or sayings of God*, but they are not The Word of God. They are a declaration of the Fountain, but not the Fountain itself. They give an account of the creation and fall of man, showing the origin of evil. They make mention also of the remedy, and show forth Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. In short, “All Scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”²

The Scriptures therefore are profitable to every believer, whether he be a private character, or a public minister of the Gospel; for it was never intended that the *interpretation* of them should be confined to preachers; as it is the duty of all diligently to search the Scriptures. Paul commends the Bereans in that after they had received the Word they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.³

But to make a trade of the Scriptures, in the way of preaching from them for money, I believe is an abuse

(1) Ephesians iv. 14. (2) 2 Timothy iii. 17. (3) Acts xvii. 11.

thereof. "Buy the truth and sell it not,"¹ was the advice of Solomon. I believe if more were faithful to the inward teaching, there would be less of paid preaching than there is; and, indeed, if there were none, I do not believe the Church of Christ would suffer any loss; there might be those who would come forward according to the gospel command, "*Freely ye have received, freely give.*"² Whether we pay men for preaching or not, one thing is certain, each individual must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. "For it is God which worketh *in* you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."³ Hence it is an individual work, under the operation of the Holy Spirit. "So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God."⁴ "For every man shall bear his own burden."⁵

What a great blessing it is to be made free! And they whom the Son maketh free, are free indeed;⁶ they are not in bondage to any man, nor are they beholden to the preachings of men; but having, abiding in them, "*an unction from the Holy One,*" they need not that any man teach them, but as the same anointing teacheth them all things, and is truth and is no lie.⁷ And this inward teaching is superior to all other teaching, and is always near at hand. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."⁸

If all Scripture be given by inspiration of God,⁹ then doth it follow, that the inspiration is superior to the Scripture. Of what use are the Scriptures without

(1) Prov. xxiii. 29. (2) Matt. x. 8. (3) Phil. ii. 13. (4) Rom. xiv. 12.
 (5) Galatians vi. 5. (6) John viii. 36. (7) 1 John ii. 27. (8) James i. 5.
 (9) 2 Timothy iii. 16.

that inspiration? Some of them of no more than a lantern without a light, or a map to a traveller walking in the dark: it is the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit that *giveth light*. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."¹ "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you."²

Connected, therefore, with the inward teaching, the Scriptures are a great blessing. The promises of God therein recorded, are yea and amen in Christ Jesus to them that believe;³ and there is no respect of persons with God.⁴ What an assurance! Happy indeed is the soul which can implicitly rely thereon; for there are given unto us great and precious promises, whereby "we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us";⁵ and from which the soul doth indeed draw great solace. But to the carnally minded, to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, the Scriptures are a sealed book. The dead man has no heart to feel, no eyes to see, no hands to handle, no mouth to taste: all is lost to him; it is a hidden mystery, the value of which he knoweth not how to appreciate. It is the living, the renewed and spiritual soul, that beholds the beauties, feels the power, taketh of the fruit of the tree of life, and of the water of life, and feedeth thereon, and groweth up like calves of the stall.⁶

(1) John xiv. 26. (2) John xvi. 14. (3) 2 Cor. i. 20. (4) Romans ii. 11.

(5) Hebrews vi. 18. (6) Malachi iv. 2.

It follows therefore, that although the Scriptures are a great blessing to those whose eyes are opened to see the wondrous things written therein ; yet it must be remembered that it is *a sealed book to the natural man* ; and that no man by his own ingenuity can break open that seal : therefore they can be of but little use, unless the hidden truths therein contained be opened to the mind. And what but the Light within can open them ? For Christ saith of the Spirit of truth, “He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.”¹ And as attention is paid to this divine Principle of light within, it will grow and increase,² so that the Scriptures will be more and more opened to the eye of the soul ; for this is the Foundation of all saving knowledge, and without which the Scriptures are unavailing.

But, in thus exalting the inward light above all, it is not intended to derogate from the Holy Scriptures, but rather to give unto them their right and proper place. For these divine records abundantly point to this Principle, as that which is to lead into all truth,³ and to guide the believer in the way which he should go ;⁴ for there may be some certain duty required of an individual, of which he cannot be assured by the Scriptures. For instance, how can any one know from the Holy Scriptures, that it is his duty to preach the Gospel ? and yet some are called thereto, and woe will be to such if they preach not the Gospel ; for a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto them. The Scriptures do indeed show

(1) John xvi. 14. (2) Prov. iv. 18. (3) John xvi. 13.
(4) Psalms xxxii. 8.

how the work is to be done, and the qualifications necessary for the right performance thereof; but they do not say to an individual—Thou art the man; this work God requires at thy hand. Here, in this case, there must of necessity be a direct testimony, and that testimony is *the inward revelation of the Spirit*. It belongeth to the Master to call whom he will unto this work; and he also must send them, as he did the disciples formerly, or they will not profit the people. It must indeed be a very great presumption in any one to take upon himself to preach, except he be thus sent. But alas! how many are there, who, because they are able to discourse on the Scriptures, and make sermons, believe they are called to preach; and therefore do not wait for this inward call, but run before they are sent; some taking up preaching as a man taketh up a trade—to get a living by it; and others to show off their natural parts and wisdom, thereby feeding pride and self complacency. Are preachers, actuated by such motives as these, likely to promote the truly spiritual and self denying religion of the blessed Jesus? By no means: such preach themselves, and not Christ crucified, “the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”¹ Therefore no preaching will truly profit the people, but that which cometh from the necessity of “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.”² Indeed that preaching that draweth unto man, instead of turning unto Christ, the light within, is not only unprofitable, but exceedingly injurious, inasmuch as it tendeth to build up the hearers on the wrong foundation.

(1) 1 Cor. i. 24. (2) 1 Cor. ix. 16.

However excellent and profitable the Holy Scriptures may be, in their place, (and that they are both profitable and excellent, I have already admitted,) they are nevertheless *not the sure and unerring Guide*, inasmuch as a person cannot, in every circumstance of life, be assured thereby, what may be the particular duty required of him to perform: but this is made known by that which unlocks the Scriptures—"the Key of David":—the inward revelation of the Holy Ghost.

The Scriptures cannot give life, but they point to Christ who is the Resurrection and the Life. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."¹ Mark! it was a fault of the Jews, here reproved, in trusting for eternal life in the Scriptures. Therefore, however imperative some may view this injunction of our Lord, yet to me, it is evident, that it was never intended that we should rest in the Scriptures, or make them the Foundation of our religion, but rather as a means to get to the more perfect knowledge of Christ Jesus, the true Light and eternal Life. And I do believe that they who follow Christ, and walk in his light, will esteem these written witnesses for truth before any other book; therefore will they be often searching the Holy Scriptures.

I am aware, that in placing this divine light of Christ as a fundamental Principle of the Christian religion, I am differing from the recorded sentiments of John Wesley, who, in speaking of the fundamental doctrine of the Methodists, asks "What was their fundamental doc-

(1) Rev. iii. 7. (2) John v. 40

trine? and answers, “*That the Bible is the whole and sole Rule of faith and practice.*” And again, says, “*Here I am, I and my Bible. I will not, I dare not, vary from this book, either in great things or small: I have no authority to dispense with one jot or tittle of what is contained therein. I am determined to be a Bible Christian,* not almost, but altogether. Who will meet me on this ground? Join me in this or not at all.*” But admitting the Scriptures to be a rule or law, the light of Christ within is a more perfect law: for this is the perfect law of liberty.¹ “*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*”² “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*”³ It appears therefore to me, that it is the inward law which is now chiefly to be attended to by Christians; yet this inward law will never contradict the outward letter of the Scriptures, but will lead to the observance of all the precepts of Christ and his Apostles therein contained. And if the Scriptures be considered a guide, the light within is a more sure guide, inasmuch as it will guide in all circumstances—concerning which the Scriptures may be silent—by *an immediate and perceptible influence*, showing what is to be done, and what left undone.

Placing the Scriptures as the foundation of religion, or as the whole and sole rule of faith and practice, in

* See Note page 3.

(1) James i. 25. (2) Romans x. 4. (3) Romans viii. 2.

the room of Christ, the light within, has been the cause of all the different sects and parties which have divided the church of Christ. Hence the number of books which have been published in support of particular passages of Scripture: many of which views are in direct opposition to each other. But if all Christian professors had built their religion on the True Foundation, namely *the revelation of Christ in the heart*, then indeed would the chief part of those books never have been written. But alas! too true it is, that the stone which should have become the head of the corner, has been set at nought and rejected by many builders;¹ who, instead of founding their building thereon, have built their house upon the sand. Some build on the notions and opinions of others: these, supposing that their teachers know better what is right for them to do, than they do themselves, commit the guidance and direction of their immortal souls to fallible man. Now if the Scriptures are not to be made the foundation of our religion, but rather that which gave them forth, then much less should we build on the sayings or writings of men, who have never professed to be under the guidance of the unerring Spirit of truth.

It is far from my intention to despise, or underrate, that help which may be obtained from the reading of other books besides the Holy Scriptures. I can testify, that it was by reading the works of some of the early Friends, that my attention was turned to that divine Principle within, which teacheth all things, and which I have found to be truth, and no lie. It is doubtless

(1) Luke xx. 17.

with books on religious subjects, as with oral discourses, some are more spiritual than others: “but he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”¹ As soon as the soul has found the spring within, and tasted of the pure Fountain, it will then loathe those corrupted streams, which have been fouled with the feet of man.² I have, in my time, read many books of various sorts, on religious subjects, and from some of them I have received much profit; yet of all the writings I have ever read, I never yet found any that came up, in the simplicity and purity of truth, and in sublimity of sentiment, to the Holy Scriptures: therefore, as a standard of divine truths, *I place these before all other writings.* Yet, however excellent they be, as an outward test or standard, they who build upon them as their chief corner stone, will be in danger of being tossed to and fro with the doctrines of men. But he that settleth down to the teachings of Christ in the heart, and continueth therein, will find that his building is founded on a rock, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”³ For this is the sure Foundation which cannot be overthrown.

O that men were gathered to this teaching of Christ in the heart! Then indeed there would be no need of the teachings of men;⁴ then would sects and parties be all done away, and the church of Christ become one united family; then would religion be transferred from the head to the heart, from empty notions and opinions to a living, operative Principle; then would there be no

(1) 1 Cor. ii. 15. (2) Ezekiel xxxiv. 19. (3) Mattw. xvi. 18. (4) 1 John ii. 27.; & 1 Cor. ii. 5.

further need of saying one to another, Know ye the Lord, for all would know him, from the least to the greatest: ¹ and then would the latter day dispensation break forth in all its glory, and that prophetic declaration be fulfilled: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."²

(1) Jeremiah xxxi. 34. (2) Revelation xi. 15.

CHAP. VI.

THE CONCLUSION.

ALL human Institutions have their origin, their progress, and decline; but that which is of the Lord endureth for ever: therefore no work but that which is of God will abide—that which is of man will come to nought. “For all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.”¹

Here then we see the Foundation of all true religion, and that by which it is to be proved: namely, “*The Word of the Lord.*” And this Word, which was made flesh and dwelt amongst men, now dwelleth by his Spirit in the hearts of the faithful,² and is made unto them, wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.³ It was said by one of the early Methodist preachers that “the overthrow of Methodism, if it should come to pass, will be owing to the mixing of human inventions with its original simplicity.” Now I

(1) 1 Peter i. 24. (2) John xiv. 17. (3) 1 Cor. i. 30.

believe *human inventions* have constituted a part of Methodism, even from the beginning. And although I am ready to admit that there has, in a measure, been a divine work amongst the Methodists; yet it cannot be denied but that *much of man's work has been mixed up therewith*; and that from this mixture, it has never been clear.

Thus has Methodism not come clearly up from that state into which the church had fallen when she left her primitive purity, but she has retained some of those customs and usages, set up in the dark ages of apostacy, to the great injury of true religion. And that this has been a great evil to Methodism, is quite evident; for the enemy, by his subtlety, has thereby undermined and nearly destroyed that vital and experimental part she had at the beginning, as will hereafter be shown. For I do believe that some of her first ministers were much under the divine influence, as may be seen, for instance, in John Nelson, of Birtstall, in Yorkshire.

Under the ministry of this plain and illiterate man, this hard-working stone mason, many were convinced of their sins, and many received the forgiveness thereof; and a large society was raised up in those parts through his instrumentality. He suffered much on account of his religion; being persecuted, pressed for a soldier, confined in a dungeon, buffeted by some of his officers; whom he told that *he could not fight, because it was contrary to the spirit of a Christian*. He said to his Major, who asked him how he prepared his sermons, "*I do not study what to say, but speak as the Spirit of God enables me.*"

If then, the early Methodist preachers believed the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to be a necessary qualification for a minister of the Gospel, and relied thereon in the work of the ministry; and if the body generally, considered a change of heart and life absolutely necessary to constitute a Christian indeed and in truth; and if by the experience of the vital power of religion, they were led to adopt plainness of apparel, and also a separation from the spirit of the world—the important questions remain to be asked,—Where are these marks now? And what comparison will the present state of Methodism bear with her primitive state? I acknowledge she is much grown and increased; but hath she retained her primitive strength and vigour? If so, what meaneth the sound of the organ to help her in her devotions, and the prayer book to relieve her preachers? Are not these crutches on which she is leaning? And are they not proofs that she is rapidly returning to that state from whence she came? Did Paul or Peter use a prayer book? Had the primitive Christians need of an organ to help them in their spiritual worship? Or, indeed, needed the primitive Methodists such things? Nay, would they not have considered these things as incumbrances? And have they not been so considered by some of the more devout part of the society, in the present day? I appeal to the ancients among the people. Do not you see a great change in Methodism? Is there not now, than formerly, a greater conformity to the world, in *dress*, in *carnal mindedness*, and in *formality*? And are not these proofs of a retrograde movement, a degeneracy of principle? And is this at all to

be wondered at, seeing she hath forsaken the guide of her youth, and is now staying herself *chiefly* on outward forms and ceremonies? If indeed, the vital and experimental part of religion begin to decay, then there will be a falling away also in testimony; and religion, with such, will become an empty sound, a form without power, a body without life, salt without savour, and therefore good for nothing.

Let us, my dear friends, examine the foundation on which we stand. Let us not say, because in former days the Spirit of the Lord was poured out amongst us, and sons and daughters prophesied;¹ and at the times of these refreshings from the presence of the Lord, the sins of many were blotted out;² let us not say, because these things have been experienced in days that are past, that God is still in the midst of us. We ought to have present proofs, and not at all to lean to past experience. But does the Divine Glory now crown our assemblies? Are we now hungering and thirsting after righteousness?³ and are we fed and nourished up unto eternal life? Are we growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?⁴ and are we bringing forth the fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God?⁵ Are we growing more dead to the world daily? And do we feel a continual increase of attraction towards heavenly and eternal things?⁶ Have we the victory over the world;⁷ over its cares and anxieties, as well as its vain allurements? Have we the

(1) Acts ii. 17. (2) Acts iii. 19. (3) Matthew v. 6. (4) 2 Peter iii. 18.
(5) Phil. i. 11. (6) Matthew vi. 21. (7) 1 John v. 4.

victory over our tempers?¹ These are sure marks whereby to try ourselves.

But if, on examination, we find that, instead of this being our present state and experience—our meetings are cold and formal, our preachings an empty sound,² and the living Word of the Lord scarce amongst us.³ And if instead of feasting on fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined,⁴—we have only husks to eat, and by reason thereof, are in a poor dwarfish and unfruitful state, and have not held fast whereunto we had once attained, but have been going backward instead of forward, and have now less power over the world, depraved self, and our own evil tempers, than we formerly had! If then this be our deplorable case, may there not be some reason to fear that the candlestick will be removed out of its place, except we repent?⁵ O my friends! let us not be deceived by specious appearances—an increase of numbers is no proof of an increase of piety: the sanctuary must be cleansed and kept clean, or the defilement will spread.

It is plain, there is no remaining stationary in religion. We must either be going forward or we cannot hold fast whereunto we have attained: either we are growing in grace, or we are backsliding. We must be increasing in heavenly mindedness, or we are growing more depraved, and more carnally minded. If our religion has not changed our hearts, and subjugated our wills, *so as to produce an alteration in our tempers and dispositions*, it has done but little for us. Nay, may we

(1) James i. 26. (2) 1 Cor. xiii. 1. (3) 1 Samuel iii. 1. (4) Isaiah xxv. 6.

(5) Revelation ii. 5.

not say in this case, that the remedy has not reached the bottom of the disease? therefore has our religion been ineffectual.

I believe there is great danger in trusting in former experience; and I fear there are many who herein miss their way. Because God, in his infinite love and mercy, has been pleased, occasionally, to pour out of his Spirit, and fill the hearts of some with peace and joy, they have been induced to build too much on a former divine visitation, thereby overlooking the obligation to continual watchfulness and seeking after holiness. The children of Israel found that the manna of to-day would not do for to-morrow—each day must have its fresh supply of heavenly food.

We are no longer children or servants of God, than whilst we continue to obey him: “His servants ye are to whom ye obey.”¹ There is, therefore, a necessity of a continual watching unto prayer; a continual looking unto Christ, the light which shineth in the secret of the heart. “Look unto me, saith the Lord, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.”² As we continue to look inward, and follow our guide, we shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.³ *This light of life, or inward revelation, is “the chief corner stone,”⁴ the “sure foundation,”⁵ the rock which cannot be moved, on which the church is built, as Christ himself hath declared.⁶*

Let us then, my dear friends, take heed that we build on no other foundation than this: “For other founda-

(1) Romans vi. 16. (2) Isaiah xliy. 22. (3) John viii. 12. (4) Ephes. ii. 20.

(5) Isaiah xxviii. 16. (6) Matthew xvi. 18.

tion can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.¹ Let us not build on any outward ordinance, or what are commonly called the means of grace, and expect to be saved by attending to these. Let us not build on our prayers, either private or public, offered up in our own will and time, for these are sandy foundations upon which our buildings will not stand when God ariseth to shake terribly the earth; but when we pray, let it *always* be with the Spirit and with the understanding also. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.² Let us not build on the sayings or writings of any man, however pious or eminent. Let us not build on the Scriptures of truth; but rather *on that which gave them forth*, on that *by which* holy men wrote and spoke: Let us build *on Christ, the light within*; and then, the foundation being sure, our building will stand: the rain may descend and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon our house, but it will not fall, because it is founded on a rock. Have we, my friends, been building upon this rock, this sure foundation which cannot be moved? Have we been building upon that *divine revelation*, by which Peter said unto his master, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."³ Are we then resting on this inward revelation? If so, and we continue to obey this Divine Teacher, then shall we be likened "unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and

(1) 1 Cor. iii. 11. (2) Rom. viii. 26. (3) Matthew xvi. 16.

beat upon that house ; and it fell not ; for it was founded upon a rock.”¹

But if we have been resting on notions and opinions of our own, or on the sayings or writings of others, independent of this inward revelation—then have we been hearers only, and not doers of the law of Christ ; and are likened “ unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell : and great was the fall of it.”²

We see then, the importance of making a right beginning in religion ; of building upon a sure foundation. But we are given to understand by an apostle, that it is not only important to lay the foundation right ; but says he, “ Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble : every man’s work shall be made manifest : for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire ; and the fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire.”³ Let us then examine ourselves by this very instructive passage of Scripture.

When we have been brought into this fiery ordeal, has our religion stood the test ? Have we proved the truth of that declaration, “ When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ?”⁴ If so, then there

(1) Matt. vii. 25. (2) Matt. vii. 27. (3) 1 Cor. iii. 15. (4) Isaiah xliii. 2.

is reason to conclude that we have been building upon the right foundation with right materials. But if, on the appearance of the refining fire, our religion has vanished away, and nothing left but fretfulness, murmurings, and hasty tempers—then ought we to conclude, that we have been building with those things that will not abide the day of this fiery visitation.

And now, my dear friends, to conclude. If it be thought by some, that I have, in this address, exceeded the bounds of a just requirement, and busied myself with things which do not concern me; my answer is, That it is far from my intention, to force my sentiments upon any one, or in the least degree to interfere with that liberty of conscience which is the indisputable right of every believer under the Gospel dispensation. Nor do I wish that my reader should hastily credit what is stated; but I rather court inquiry; that he should seriously search and examine for himself, and see whether these things be so. In order to assist herein, I have made references to the Holy Scriptures. For I am quite willing to abide the test of the Scriptures, and do allow, if any speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in him.

In the remarks which I have made, it should be remembered that they have been chiefly on my own experience; and in making them, it has been far from my intention to give offence to the more serious and devout part of that large body of professors—those especially who may not have gone to the same lengths

in will worship, and walking in the light of their own fire, and the sparks of their own kindling, as I and some others have done. It has been my sincere desire, to encourage the humble, and check the forward, and to exhort all to turn more fully to the true Teacher within, that they may be less subject to the ordinances and commandments of men; which are at variance with that perfect law of liberty, which constituteth the glory of the latter day, or Gospel dispensation.

A very valuable end of this my feeble attempt will be answered, if they to whom it applies, should, by the perusal thereof, be induced to avoid those errors, and improprieties of conduct, which, herein have been pointed out; and be also stimulated to pursue that straightforward course to the true rest of soul, by forsaking all their own works in the will of the creature, and by turning to the true Light within, which will lead into all truth, and out of all error. For I can truly testify, that the many deviations from a right conduct, (which have unhappily been my lot through a great part of my poor pilgrimage) have arisen *from disobedience to the voice of the true Guide*, and by hearkening to the voice of the stranger, whereby I have been led into the path of error. And this has been the cause of many of my trials, and much of my sufferings. "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."¹

(1) *Isaiah xlvi. 18.*

Thus, my dear friends, have I endeavoured *to give a reason for my leaving your Society* ; and have also attempted *to hold up the standard of truth, by exalting the inward teaching above all other teaching, and showing the insufficiency of that religion which resteth chiefly in the outward part*. How far I have succeeded in accomplishing these points, and thereby proving that I have found out *a more excellent way*, must, of course, be left to you to judge. But in whatever light this communication be received by you ; whether the sentiments herein given be accepted or rejected : whatever effect this appeal may have on your feelings and conduct—I hope I shall have the consolation arising from having *aimed* at doing good. I humbly trust that I can say, that it hath been the love of God that hath constrained me to take this step. And if it should not succeed, in accomplishing that for which it hath been intended—I hope I shall stand clear, having feebly endeavoured to discharge a duty, which I believe to have been laid upon me.

But, my dear friends, I am inclined to hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I have thus spoken. For I am persuaded there are amongst you, a sincere and tender-minded people, those who, on account of religion, make some sacrifices, and undergo some privations. To you therefore, the truly pious and devout, is this my humble appeal addressed. Receive it, my dear friends, in the same love in which it is given. And that you and I may fully turn unto, and continually fix our attention upon, *that divine principle of light and life which maketh its appearance in the secret of the heart* ; that we may thereby,

not only be brought to know our true state and condition; "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, [may be] changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord:"¹ and finally, when this our earthly pilgrimage shall be ended, we may attain unto that state of endless happiness, where sects and parties will be done away, where sorrow and sighing will cease, and where we shall be for ever with the Lord—is the sincere and fervent desire of your loving friend.

J. S.

Manchester, 1835.

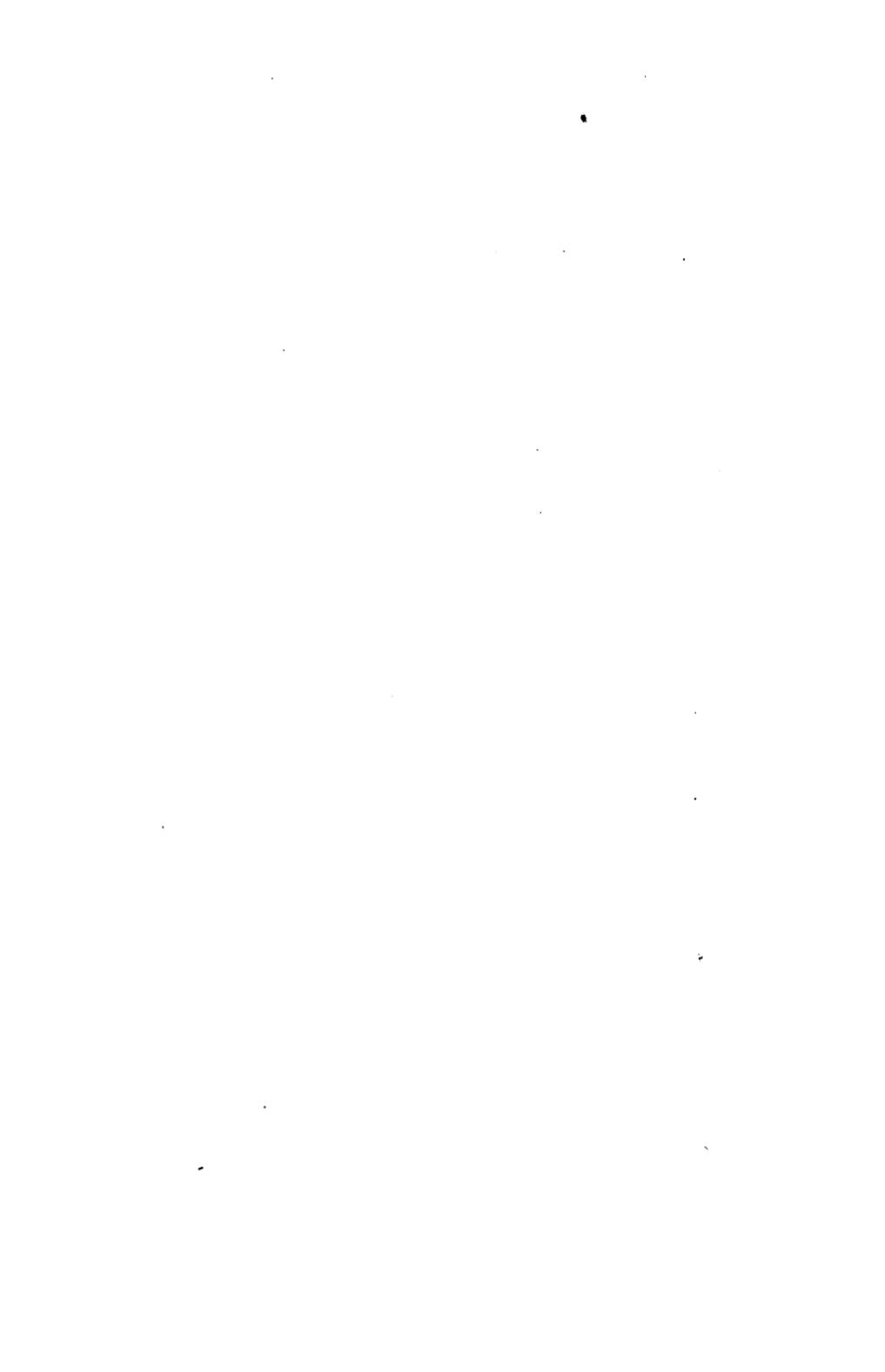
Joseph Stott.
(1) 2 Corinthians iii. 18.

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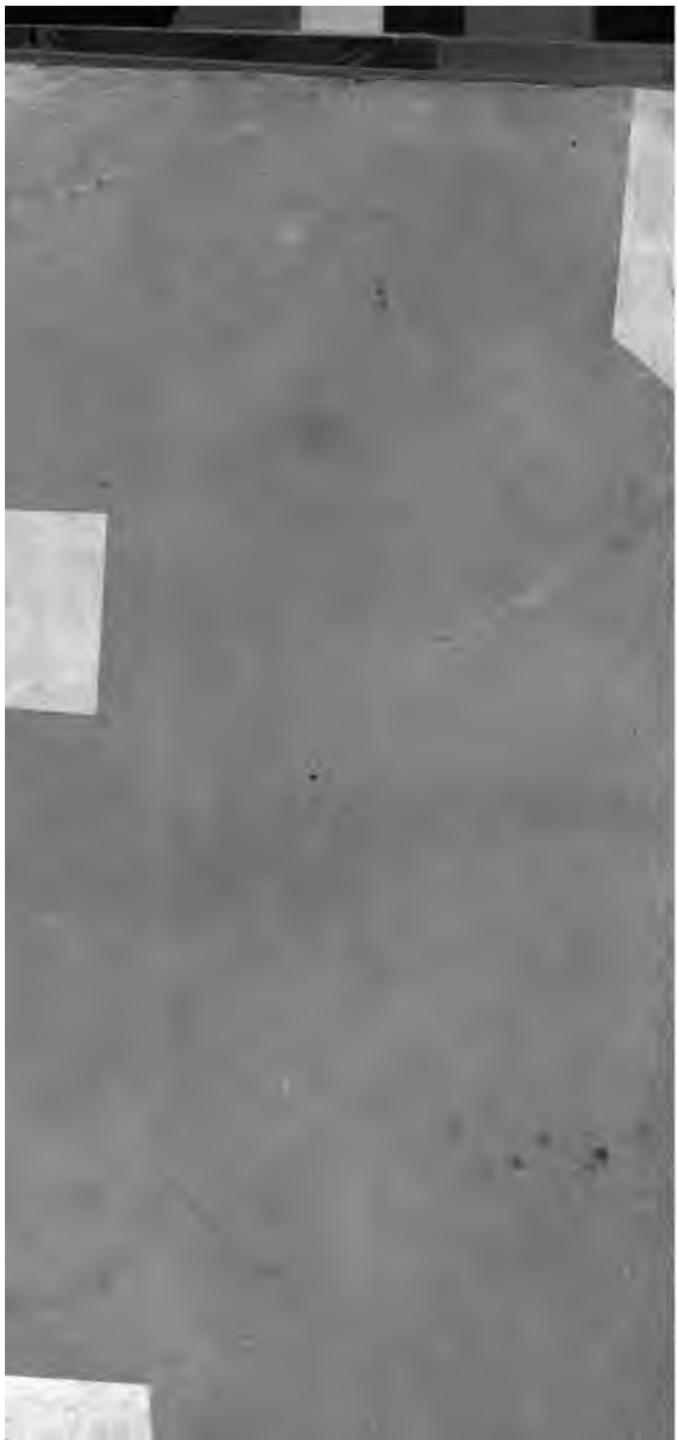
Page 46, line 13, for "praise" read "peace."

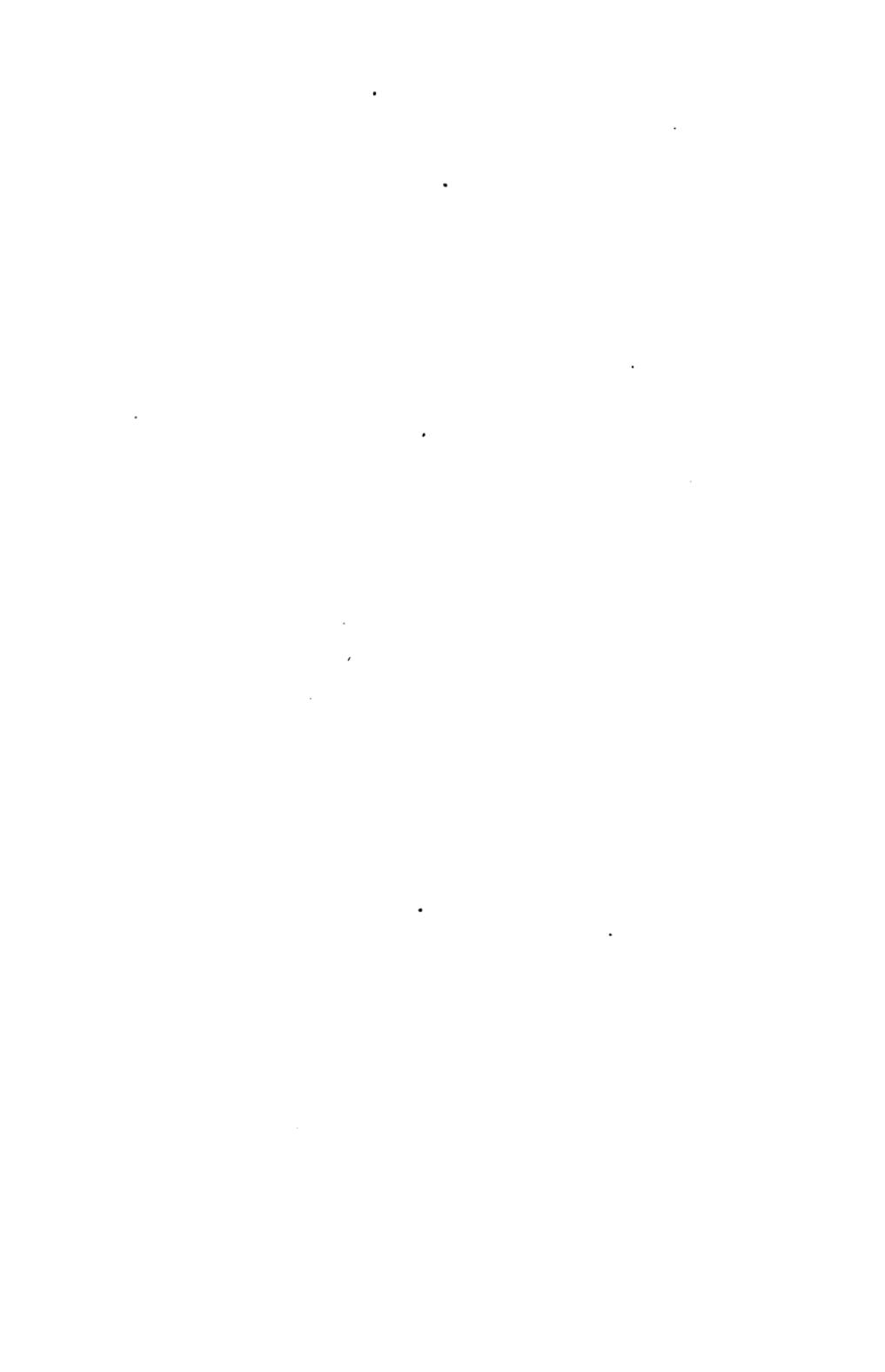


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